Those who have spiritual discrimination call him wise whose undertakings are all free from desire, for his actions are consumed in the fire of knowledge.

—*The Bhagavad-Gita*

THEOSOPHY

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H. P. BLAVATSKY

AUGUST is the month of the birth of H. P. Blavatsky, in the year 1831. We know how her life-span of sixty years was occupied, and something of the incredible accomplishments which were its fruit. She lifted by several crucial notches the self-awareness of mankind. She did this by bringing into new focus the testimony of all religion, science, learning, and subjective experience, on the basic question of self-knowledge. This meant, as she explained in *The Secret Doctrine,* a direct encounter with "old and time-honoured errors," since it is quite impossible to pursue authentic truth without contesting and exposing mistaken beliefs. Of the errors with which she had to contend, she wrote (*S.D.* I, 299):

> Marshalled by blind conservatism, conceit and prejudice, they are constantly on the watch, ready to strangle every truth, which, awakening from its age-long sleep, happens to knock for admission. Such has been the case ever since man became an animal. That this proves in every case *moral death* to the revealers, who bring to light any of these old, old truths, is as certain as that it gives LIFE and REGENERATION to those who are fit to profit even by the little that is now revealed to them.

For evidence of what H.P.B. meant by "moral death," one has but to turn to the compilation from her letters and other materials published after her death under the title "She Being Dead Yet Speaketh." Here it becomes plain that H.P.B. knew exactly what she was getting into, in accepting the task of a "revealer."

The open attacks on H.P.B. during her life reached their climax in an article in the New York *Sun* for June 1, 1890. It had the form of an interview with Prof. Elliott Coues, a man of some scientific pretensions. In this interview Coues repeated every slander and gossipy charge that had ever been made against Madame Blavatsky, filling seven closely printed columns of small type. Because of the personal nature of the accusations, and, as she put it, in behalf of "the security in the future of Theosophists," she brought suit against the *Sun* for libel. As she explained:

> For some fifteen years I have calmly stood by and seen my good name assailed by newspaper gossips who delight to dwell on the personal peculiarities of those who are well known, and have worked on for the spread of our Theosophical ideas, feeling confident that, though I might be assailed by small minds who try their best to bring me into reproach, the Society which I helped to found would withstand the attacks, and, indeed, grow under them. This latter has been the case. It may be asked by some members why I have never replied to those attacks which were directed against Occultism and phenomena. For two reasons: Occultism will remain forever, no matter how assailed, and Occult phenomena can never be proved in a Court of Law during this century. Besides, I have never given public currency to any of the latter, but have always objected to the giving out of things the profane cannot understand.
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> But now a great metropolitan daily in New York, with no knowledge of the facts of the case, throws broadcast before the public many charges against me, the most of which meet their refutation in my life for over a decade. But as one of them reflects strongly on my moral character and brings into disrepute the honorable name of a dead man, an old family friend, it is impossible for me to remain silent, and so I have directed my lawyers in New York to bring action against the New York *Sun* for libel.

Well, we know what happened. The *Sun*'s lawyers were obliged to confess in open court their inability to prove the charges on which the case depended. Before the final decision, however, Madame Blavatsky died, automatically terminating the action. The *Sun* nonetheless published a retraction and invited Mr. Judge to contribute an article about H.P.B., to make amends. As a passage in *The Theosophical Movement* puts it:

> . . . this article and its editorial endorsement amounted to a complete reversal of the position of the *Sun*. This can be accounted for on only two grounds: (1) that the *Sun* after vigorous and prolonged efforts to find evidence to support even one of

> the charges found that they were mere calumnies, and (2) that its publishers were men honorable enough voluntarily to make amends for the wrong done by publishing a retraction, even after the death of H.P.B. had freed them from all risk of damages.

Today, attacks on Madame Blavatsky have been resumed, with charges even more ridiculous, and still less founded on fact—if that is possible—than those assembled by Prof. Coues. Without any evidence at all, it has been claimed that Madame Blavatsky interested herself in a theory of political assassinations and compiled a "revolutionary handbook" descriptive of methods of gaining political control of a country through terrorizing acts.

H.P.B. had no concern with politics and wrote no such handbook. She was a follower of the teachings of Gautama Buddha and sought the improvement of the human race through moral regeneration, not by revolutionary bloodshed. The ethics found in her teachings are the highest known to man. The claim of "devil-worship," wildly inferred from a glance at analyses of theological symbolism found in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) is totally without meaning. This is clear from the fact that H.P.B. wrote extensively to reject the existence of a personal Devil. That she saw, as have others, in the symbolism of Lucifer the same meaning that the Prometheus myth discloses is hardly ground for such a charge. The level of discussion of this subject in her works may be seen from the following (*S.D.* I, 70):

> The devil is now called Darkness by the Church, whereas, in the Bible he is called "Son of God" (see Job), the bright star of the early morning, Lucifer (see Isaiah). There is a whole philosophy of dogmatic craft in the reason why the first Archangel, who sprang from the depths of Chaos, was called Lux (Lucifer), the "Luminous Son of the Morning," or manvantaric Dawn. He was transformed by the Church into Lucifer or Satan, because he is higher and older than Jehovah, and had to be sacrificed to the new dogma.

It is perhaps too much to expect a modern newspaper reporter or television commentator to inform himself of the recondite meanings behind such considerations of ancient symbolism. But to infer "devil-worship" from scholarly investigations of the philosophy of religion is insane nonsense as well as vicious innuendo. A just comment on the part of a journalist would be to point to H. P. Blavatsky's Preface to the second volume of *Isis Unveiled* (1887), where she wrote:

> Were it possible, we would keep this work out of the hands of many Christians whom its perusal would not benefit, and for whom it was not written. We allude to those whose faith in their respective churches is pure and sincere, and those whose sinless lives reflect the glorious example of that Prophet of Nazareth, by whose mouth the spirit of truth spake loudly to humanity. . . . [Such Christians] are to be found at this day, in pulpit and pew, in palace and cottage; but the increasing materialism, worldliness and hypocrisy are fast diminishing their proportionate number. Their charity, and simple, child-like faith in the infallibility of their Bible, their dogmas, and their clergy, bring into full activity all the virtues that are implanted in our common nature. We have personally known such God-fearing priests and clergymen, and we have always avoided debate with them, lest we might be guilty of the cruelty of hurting their feelings; nor would we rob a single layman of his blind confidence, if it alone made possible for him holy living and serene dying.
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> An analysis of religious beliefs in general, this volume is particularly directed against theological Christianity, the chief opponent of free thought. It contains not one word against the pure teachings of Jesus, but unsparingly denounces their debasement into pernicious ecclesiastical systems that are ruinous to man's faith in his immortality and his God, and subversive of all moral restraint.

When has searching religious questioning had a more compassionate advocate and practitioner?

The fresh libels of H. P. Blavatsky seem to come "out of the blue," with no more provocation than the incident of Sirhan Sirhan's request for *The Secret Doctrine* for reading in his cell. Perhaps we can take all these curiously lurid developments as evidence of the sustained capacity for awakening men's minds, in the present-day Theosophical Movement. And, as something less than a century ago it was said, attacks cannot hurt, so long as Theosophists remain steadfast in their work and firm in their resolve, so we may say again, today.

THE DWELLERS ON HIGH MOUNTAINS

AN account of the dwellers upon high mountains would be incomplete without some reference to a widespread belief prevailing in Hindustan in regard to authorities and others, who are said to dwell in inaccessible places, and who are now and then seen by natives. It is true that all over India are to be found Fakirs of much or little sanctity, and of greater or less accumulation of dirt, but the natives all tell of Fakirs, as many of us would call them, who dwell alone in places remote from the habitation of man, and who are regarded with a feeling of veneration very different from that which is accorded to the ordinary traveling devotee.

The Hindu has an intense religious nature and says that devotion to religious contemplation is one of the highest walks in life. He therefore looks upon the traveling ascetic as one who by means of renunciation has gained a great degree of advancement toward final bliss, and he says that there are other men who are farther advanced in this line of practice. These others finding the magnetism or exhalations from ordinary people and from places where persons congregate to be inimical to further progress, have retired to spots difficult to find even when sought for, and not at all likely to be stumbled upon by accident. For that reason they select high mountains, because the paths worn by man in going from place to place on earth are always by that route which is the shortest or most easy of travel, just as electricity by a law of its being will always follow the line of least resistance and quickest access.

And so English and French travelers tell of meeting from time to time with natives who repeat local traditions and lore relating to some very holy man who lives alone upon some neighboring mountain, where he devotes his time to contemplating the universe as a whole, and in trying to reach, if he may, final emancipation.

The name given to these men is "mahatma," meaning, in English, "great soul," because it is claimed that they could not renounce the world and its pleasures unless they possessed souls more noble

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NOTE.—This article by W.Q.J. was first published in *The Word*, June, 1912.

and of greater dynamic force than the souls of the mere ordinary man, who is content to live on through ages of reincarnations round the great wheel of the universe, awaiting a happy chanceful deliverance from the bond of matter some day.

The great traveler, the Abbé Huc, who went over a large part of Thibet and put his wonderful experiences, as a Catholic missionary there, into an interesting book of travels, refers often to these men with a different name. But he establishes the fact beyond dispute that they are believed to live as related, and to possess extraordinary power over the forces of nature, or as the learned and pious Abbé would say, an intimate and personal combination with the devil himself, who in turn does great and miraculous works for them.

The French traveler Jacolliot also attests to the wide extent of the belief in these extraordinary men whose lesser disciples he claims to have seen and have had perform for him extraordinary and hair-raising feats of magic, which they said to him they were enabled to do by the power transmitted to them from their guru or teacher, one of the Mahatmas, a dweller on some high mountain.

It seems they assert that the air circulating around the tops of mountains of great altitude is very pure and untainted with the emanations from animals or man and that, therefore, the Mahatmas can see spiritually better and do more to advance their control over nature by living in such pure surroundings. There is indeed much to be said in favor of the sanitary virtue of such a residence. Upon a raw, moist day, down upon the level of our cities, one can easily see, made heavily and oppressively visible, the steamy exhalation from both human beings and quadrupeds. The fact that upon a fine day we do not see this is not proof that on those days the emanations are stopped. Science declares that they go on all the time, and are simply made palpable by the natural process of the settling of moisture upon cold and damp days.

Among Europeans in India all stories respecting the dwellers upon high mountains to whom we are referring are received in two ways. One is that which simply permits it to be asserted that such men exist, receiving the proposition with a shrug of either indifference or lack of faith. The other, that one which admits the truth of the proposition while wondering how it is to be proved. Many officers of the English army have testified to a belief in these traditions and many to not only belief, but also to have had ocular

demonstrations of their wonderful powers. While the other side is simply represented by those who are unable to say that they ever had any proof at all.

The Hindu says that his ancient sages have always lived in these high places, safe from contamination and near the infinite. It is related that the pilgrims who annually do the round of pilgrimage through the sacred places of India, sometimes penetrate as far as a certain little temple on the sides of the sky-reaching Himalayas, and that in this is a brass tablet of great age stating that that is the highest point to which it is safe to go; and that from there one can now and then see, looking down at you from the cold and distant cliff still higher up, men of grave and venerable aspect. These are said by some to be the Mahatmas or great souls, dwelling up there alone and unsought. In Thibet the story can be heard any time of the Sacred Mountain where the great souls of the earth meet for converse and communion.

The Hindu early saw that his conquerors, the Dutch and English, were unable as well as incapable of appreciating his views of devotion and devotees, and therefore maintained a rather exasperating silence and claim of ignorance on such matters. But here and there when a listener, who was not also a scoffer, was found, he unbosomed himself, and it is now generally admitted by all well-informed Anglo-Indians and Indian scholars that there is a universal belief in these Mahatmas, or dwellers upon high mountains, extending from one end of India to the other throughout every caste.

For the Christian it ought to be significant here, that when Jehovah commanded Moses to attend him for instruction and to receive the law, he did not set the place of meeting in the plain, but designated Mount Sinai, a high place of awful ruggedness, and more or less inaccessible. Then in that high mountain he hid Moses in the cleft of the rock while he passed by, and from that high mountain, now roll and reverberate through Christendom the thunders of the Judaic law. All through the Semitic book, this peculiar connection of great events and men with high mountains is noticeable. Abraham, when he was ordered to sacrifice Isaac, received command to proceed to Mount Moriah. Sadly enough he set forth, not acquainting either the human victim or his family with his determination, and traveled some weary days to reach the appointed spot.

The thoughtful man will see the indicia of a unity of plan and action in nearly all these occurrences. The sacrifice of Isaac could with great ease and perfect propriety have been offered on the plain, but Abraham is made to go a long distance in order to reach the summit of a high mountain. And when he reached it, made his preparations, and piously lifted the fatal blade—he was restrained, and his son restored to him.

Passing rapidly through long centuries from the great patriarch down to Jesus of Nazareth, we find him preaching his most celebrated sermon not in the synagogue or at the corners of the streets, but from the mount, and from there also he distributes to the hungry multitude the loaves and fishes. Again, he is transfigured, but not in the city nor outside in view of all the people, but with two disciples he returns to the summit of a high mountain, and there the wonderful glory sat upon him. Or we watch him in the wilderness, only to see him again on a high mountain, where he resists the Arch temptation. And then, when the appointed hour for the veiling from human gaze of his earthly life is come, we have to follow him up the steep sides of the Mount Golgotha, where, in agony of body and woe of soul, with words of appealing anguish, his spirit flies to the father.

The story of Mohammed, that world-famed descendant of Ishmael, is closely associated with high mountains. He often sought the quiet and solitude of the hills to restore his health and increase his faith. It was while he was in the wilds of Mount Hira that the Angel Gabriel appeared to him, and told him he was Mohammed, the prophet of God, and to fear not. In his youth Mohammed had wandered much upon the sides and along the summits of high ranges of mountains. There the mighty trees waved their arms at him in appeal, while the sad, long traveling wind sighed pityingly through the branches, and the trembling leaves added to the force of the mighty cry of nature. Upon those mountains he was not oppressed by care nor by the adverse influences of his fellows, such as kept him down when he was one merely of a lot of camel drivers. So, then, when he returned to the mountain's clear and wide expansive view, his spiritual eyes and ears heard more than the simple moaning of the wind and saw greater meaning than unconscious motion in the beckoning of the trees. There he saw the vision of the different heavens, peopled by lovely houris, garlanded with flowers, and musical with the majestic tones of the

universe; and then, too, he saw handed to him the sword with which he was to compel all people to bow to Allah and his prophet.

The countries of all the earth are full of similar traditions. In South America, Humboldt heard the story of the wonderful people who are said to dwell unfound among the inaccessible Cordilleras and, stern traveler that he was, he set out to find some trace of them. He went so far as to leave after him a fragment of testimony of his belief that somewhere in those awful wilds a people could easily live, and perhaps did.

It was from a high mountain where he had long lived, that Peter the Hermit rushed down upon Europe with his hordes of Crusaders, men, women and children, to wrest the holy land from the profaning hand of the Saracen; and the force and fury of the feelings that inspired William Tell were drawn in upon the tops of his native high mountain, to whom upon his return, he cried:

Ye crags and peaks,
I am with you once again.

Japan, the highly civilized country of Islands so long buried from European sight, and Korea, which has only just partly opened a door of communication, have always venerated a high mountain. This is called Fujiyama. They say that it can be seen from any part of the world and they regarded it as extremely sacred. Its top is cold and covered with snow, while round its base the corn waves to the touch of the zephyr, and the flowers bloom.

The love for this mountain is so great that it is pictured on their china, in their paintings, and reproduced wherever possible, whether in mural decoration or elaborated carvings. Its sacredness is due to its being the residence, as they claim, of holy persons. And they also believe that there is, too, a spiritual Fujiyama, whose base is on earth and top in heaven.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

letters • questions • comment

In what way, if at all, do the theories of H. P. Blavatsky concerning magic and psychical phenomena, expounded so extensively in her various writings, differ from those advanced by other writers on the subject? In her books and articles, H.P.B. quotes literally dozens of travellers into all parts of the world who tell of their extraordinary experiences with tribal peoples. Going directly to the volumes quoted from, and reading the strange stories related by the travellers themselves, one finds that, interesting though they are, both the phenomena witnessed and the explanations given lack the vitality and feeling of reality that H.P.B. seems to provide. Why should this be?

In Robert Crosbie's Preface to *The Ocean of Theosophy,* he states that "Even the ordinary reader cannot fail to perceive that only 'one who knows' could have so applied Theosophy to the circumstances and conditions of every-day human existence." This, of course, concerning Mr. Judge. Did H.P.B. also speak as "one who knows"? Is there any evidence that she was witness, at first hand, to the strange and startling phenomena of which she speaks? In the early pages of *Isis Unveiled,* which the *New York Herald* called "one of the remarkable productions of the century," and of which the *Daily Graphic* wrote that "we venture nothing in saying that such an index of subjects (fifty pages) was never before compiled by any human being," H.P.B. gives her own credentials. She says:

> *No other claim is advanced for a hearing of the opinions contained in the present work than that they are based upon many years' study of both ancient magic and its modern form, Spiritualism* . . . Many years of wandering among 'heathen' and 'Christian' magicians, occultists, mesmerizers and the *tutti quanti* of white and black art, ought to be sufficient, we think, to give us a certain right to feel competent to take a practical view of this doubted and very complicated question. We have associated with the fakirs, the holy men of India, and seen them in intercourse with the *Pitris.* We have watched the proceedings and *modus operandi* of the howling and dancing dervishes; held friendly communications with the marabouts of European and Asiatic Turkey; and the serpent-charmers of Damascus and

> Benares have but few secrets that we have not had the fortune to study. Therefore, when scientists who have never had an opportunity of living among these oriental jugglers and can judge at best but superficially, tell us that there is naught in their performances but mere tricks of prestidigitation, we cannot help feeling a profound regret for such hasty conclusions." (*Isis* I, 42-3.)

Outside the ranks of Theosophists, few people perhaps are aware of the extensive travels of H. P. Blavatsky—and this at a time when transportation was everything but efficient. H.P.B. was born in Russia in 1831. Before the age of twelve, she had spent much time with Buddhist priests in the province of Astrakan, and had taken mysterious journeys beyond the Ural Mountains to Siberia and the borderlands of Mongolian countries. In her early 'teens, she studied in London and Paris under her father's supervision. Before reaching her twentieth year, she had already roamed over much of Eastern Europe, and had visited Central Asia, India, South America and Africa. Some of these travels were in the company of a Russian Countess, others were made alone in men's clothing. During her twentieth or twenty-first year, she turned up in North America, visiting such widespread areas as Mexico, Texas, New Orleans and Canada. After a trip to Bombay in 1852, she is known to have returned to the United States at the age of twenty-two, making contacts in New York and Chicago. She then proceeded via covered wagon to the Rocky Mountains, and ultimately to California and Central and South America, paying her respects along the way to certain of the Indian Chiefs who are said to have been Adepts. At twenty-four years of age, she appeared again in India, this time at Calcutta, after which she returned to Russia where she spent several years with her family, making trips, meanwhile, through the trans-Caucasian countries, and to the Black Sea.

One of the most obscure and mysterious phases of H.P.B.'s life was the seven-year period between the ages of twenty-nine and thirty-six, when she is said to have been in Tibet in the company of her Teachers. What transpired there is not known, but leaving Tibet in 1868, she went to Constantinople with her Master, thence to Greece where she saw Hilarion, and on to Syria, Italy and Egypt. While in Paris in 1873, at the age of forty-two, she received orders to proceed to New York where, in the year 1875, the Theosophical Movement of this era was launched. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 320) she writes:

> What we have said in the introductory chapter and elsewhere, of mediums and the tendency of their mediumship, is not based upon conjecture, but upon actual experience and observation. There is scarcely one phase of mediumship, of either kind, that we have not seen exemplified during the past twenty-five years, in various countries. India, Thibet, Borneo, Siam, Egypt, Asia Minor, America (North and South), and other parts of the world, have each displayed to us its peculiar phase of mediumistic phenomena and magical power.

H.P.B. lived through and survived a tragedy at sea when the ship on which she was travelling blew up, spent more than one night in the Sarcophagus in the King's Chamber of Cheops, and traded stories and experiences with the snake-charmers of upper Egypt. Add to this the fact that she spent seven years under the tutelage of the Wise Men of the Orient, and it must be admitted that her life and experiences were extraordinary, to say the least.

It was not the aim of H. P. Blavatsky to further the cause of spiritualism and psychical phenomena, whether of the nature of mediumship, hypnotism, or clairvoyance. Her aim was to teach philosophy! It was because of H.P.B.'s vast background of experience and first-hand knowledge that she possessed the power and the right to speak with conviction and authority. Is it the tone of settled conviction which pervades all of H.P.B.'s writings that characterizes them as coming from "One Who Knows," and sets them apart from the writings of other travellers?

If the Teachings of Theosophy as recorded in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and her colleague and co-worker Wm. Q. Judge, are approached and studied from this point of view, then this "something," which the questioner felt will begin a transformation in the student's heart and mind, wherein spiritual knowledge will spring up spontaneously from within.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME

GNOSIS AND CHRISTIANITY: *Christos and Sophia Achamoth*

TO return to our Sophia-Achamoth and the belief of the genuine, primitive Christians. After having produced Ilda-Baoth . . . Sophia-Achamoth suffered so much from the contact with matter, that after extraordinary struggles she escapes at last out of the muddy chaos. Although unacquainted with the pleroma, the region of her mother, she reached the middle space and succeeded in shaking off the material parts which have stuck to her spiritual nature; after which she immediately built a strong barrier between the world of intelligences (spirits) and the world of matter. Ilda-Baoth, is thus the "son of darkness," the creator of our sinful world (the physical portion of it). He follows the example of Bythos and produces from himself six stellar spirits (sons). They are all in his own image, and reflections one of the other, which become darker as they successively recede from their father. With the latter, they all inhabit seven regions disposed like a ladder, beginning under the middle space, the region of their mother, Sophia-Achamoth, and ending with our earth, the *seventh* region. Thus they are the genii of the seven planetary spheres of which the lowest is the region of our earth (the sphere which surrounds it, our æther). The respective names of these genii of the spheres are *Iòve* (Jehovah), *Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloi, Ouraios, Astaphaios.* The first four, as every one knows, are the mystic names of the Jewish "Lord God,"[1] he being, as C. W. King expresses it, "thus degraded by the Ophites into the appellations of the subordinates of the Creator"; "the two last names are those of the genii of fire and water."

Ilda-Baoth, whom several sects regarded as the God of Moses, was not a pure spirit; he was ambitious and proud, and rejecting the spiritual light of the middle space offered him by his mother Sophia-Achamoth, he set himself to create a world of his own. Aided by his

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NOTE.—"The Christian Scheme," begun in November 1967, is collated from the works of H. P. Blavatsky. It recounts the historical background and early development of Christianity.

[1] This Iove, Iao, or Jehovah is quite distinct from the God of the Mysteries, IAO, held sacred by all the nations of antiquity. We will show the difference presently.

sons, the six planetary genii, he fabricated man, but this one proved a failure. It was a monster, soulless, ignorant, and crawling on all fours on the ground like a material beast. Ilda-Baoth was forced to implore the help of his spiritual mother. She communicated to him a ray of her divine light, and so animated man and endowed him with a soul. And now began the animosity of Ilda-Baoth toward his own creature. Following the impulse of the divine light, man soared higher and higher in his aspirations; very soon he began presenting not the image of his Creator Ilda-Baoth but rather that of the Supreme Being, the "primitive man," Ennoia. Then the Demiurgus was filled with rage and envy; and fixing his jealous eye on the abyss of matter, his looks envenomed with passion were suddenly reflected in it as in a mirror; the relation became animate, and there arose out of the abyss Satan, serpent, Ophiomorphos—"the embodiment of envy and of cunning. He is the union of all that is most base in matter, with the hate, envy, and craft of a spiritual intelligence."

After that, always in spite at the perfection of man, Ilda-Baoth created the three kingdoms of nature, the mineral, vegetable, and animal, with all evil instincts and properties. Impotent to annihilate the Tree of Knowledge, which grows in his sphere as in every one of the planetary regions, but bent upon detaching "man" from his spiritual protectress, Ilda-Baoth forbade him to eat of its fruit, for fear it should reveal to mankind the mysteries of the superior world. But Sophia-Achamoth, who loved and protected the man whom she had animated, sent her own genius Ophis, in the form of a serpent to induce man to transgress the selfish and unjust command. And "man" suddenly became capable of comprehending the mysteries of creation.

Ilda-Baoth revenged himself by punishing the first pair, for man, through his *knowledge,* had already provided for himself a companion out of his spiritual and material half. He imprisoned man and woman in a dungeon of matter, in the body so unworthy of his nature, wherein man is still enthralled. But Achamoth protected him still. She established between her celestial region and "man," a current of divine light, and kept constantly supplying him with this *spiritual* illumination.

Then follow allegories embodying the idea of dualism, or the struggle between good and evil, spirit and matter, which is found in every cosmogony, and the source of which is again to be sought in India. The types and antitypes represent the heroes of this Gnostic

Pantheon, borrowed from the most ancient mythopœic ages. But, in these personages, Ophis and Ophiomorphos, Sophia and Sophia-Achamoth, Adam-Kadmon, and Adam, the planetary genii and the divine Æons, we can also recognize very easily the models of our biblical copies—the euhemerized patriarchs. The archangels, virtues and powers, are all found, under other names, in the *Vedas* and the Buddhistic system. The Avestic Supreme Being, Zero-ana, or "Boundless Time," is the type of all these Gnostic and kabalistic "Depths," "Crowns," and even of the Chaldean En-Soph. The six Amshaspends, created through the "Word" of Ormazd, the "First-Born," have their reflections in Bythos and his emanations, and the antitype of Ormazd—Ahriman and his devs also enter into the composition of Ilda-Baoth and his six *material,* though not wholly evil, planetary genii.

Achamoth, afflicted with the evils which befall humanity, notwithstanding her protection, beseeches the celestial mother Sophia —here antitype—to prevail on the unknown DEPTH to send down Christos (the son and emanation of the "Celestial Virgin") to the help of perishing humanity. Ilda-Baoth and his six sons of matter are shutting out the divine light from mankind. Man must be saved. Ilda-Baoth had already sent his own agent, John the Baptist, from the race of Seth, whom he protects—as a prophet to his people; but only a small portion listened to him—the Nazarenes, the opponents of the Jews, on account of their worshipping Iurbo-Adunai.[2] Achamoth had assured her son, Ilda-Baoth, that the reign of Christos would be only temporal, and thus induced him to send the forerunner, or precursor. Besides that, she made *him cause* the birth of the *man* Jesus from the Virgin Mary, her own type on earth, "for the creation of a material personage could only be the work of the Demiurgus, not falling within the province of a higher power. As soon as Jesus was born, Christos, the perfect, uniting himself with Sophia (wisdom and spirituality), descended through the seven planetary regions, assuming in each an analogous form, and concealing his true nature from their genii, while he attracted into himself the sparks of divine light which they retained in their essence. Thus, Christos entered into the *man* Jesus at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan. From that time Jesus began to work miracles; before that, he had been completely ignorant of his mission."

[2] Iurbo and Adunai, according to the Ophites, are names of Iao-Jehovah, one of the emanations of Ilda-Baoth. "Iurbo is called by the Abortives (the Jews) Adunai" (*Codex Nazaræus,* vol. iii., p. 73).

Ilda-Baoth, discovering that Christos was bringing to an end his own kingdom of matter, stirred up the Jews against him, and Jesus was put to death.[3] When on the Cross, Christos and Sophia left his body and returned to their own sphere. The material body of the man Jesus was abandoned to the earth, but he himself was given a body made up of *æther* (astral soul). "Thenceforward he consisted of merely *soul* and *spirit,* which was the reason why the disciples did not recognize him after the resurrection. In this spiritual state of a *simulacrum,* Jesus remained on earth for eighteen months after he had risen. During this last sojourn, "he received from Sophia that perfect knowledge, that true Gnosis, *which he communicated to the very few among the apostles* who were capable of receiving the same."

"Thence, ascending up into the middle space, he sits on the right hand of Ilda-Baoth, but unperceived by him, and there collects all the souls which shall have been purified by the knowledge of Christ. When he has collected all the spiritual light that exists in matter, out of Ilda-Baoth's empire, the redemption will be accomplished and the world will be destroyed. Such is the meaning of the re-absorption of all the spiritual light into the pleroma or fulness, whence it originally descended."

The foregoing is from the description given by Theodoret and adopted by King in his *Gnostics,* with additions from Epiphanius and Irenæus. But the former gives a very imperfect version, concocted partly from the descriptions of Irenæus, and partly from his own knowledge of the later Ophites, who, toward the end of the third century, had blended already with several other sects. Irenæus also confounds them very frequently, and the real theogony of the Ophites is given by none of them correctly. With the exception of a change in names, the above-given theogony is that of all the Gnostics, and also of the Nazarenes. Ophis is but the successor of the Egyptian *Chnuphis,* the Good Serpent with a lion's radiating head, and was held from days of the highest antiquity as an emblem of

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[3] In the "Gospel of Nicodemus," Ilda-Baoth is called *Satan* by the pious and anonymous author—evidently one of the final flings at the half-crushed enemy. "As for me," says Satan, excusing himself to the prince of hell, "I tempted him (Jesus), and stirred up my old people, the Jews, against him" (chap. 15:9). Of all examples of Christian ingratitude this seems almost the most conspicuous. The poor Jews are first robbed of their sacred books, and then, in a spurious "Gospel," are insulted by the representation of Satan claiming them as his "old people." If they were his people, and at the same time are "God's chosen people," then the name of this God must be written Satan and not Jehovah. This is logic, but we doubt if it can be regarded as complimentary to the "Lord God of Israel."

wisdom, or Thauth, the instructor and Saviour of humanity, the "Son of God." "Oh men, live soberly . . . win your immortality!" exclaims Hermes, the thrice-great Trismegistus. "Instructor and guide of humanity, I will lead you on to salvation." Thus the oldest sectarians regarded Ophis, the Agathodæmon, as identical with Christos; the serpent being the emblem of celestial wisdom and eternity, and, in the present case, the antitype of the Egyptian Chnuphis-serpent. These Gnostics, the earliest of our Christian era, held: "That the supreme Æon, having emitted other Æons out of himself, one of them, a female, *Prunnikos* (concupiscence), descended into the chaos, whence, unable to escape, she remained suspended in the mid-space, being too clogged by matter to return above, and not falling lower where there was nothing in affinity with her nature. She then produced her son Ilda-Baoth, the God of the Jews, who, in his turn, produced seven Æons, or angels,[4] who created the seven heavens."

In this plurality of heavens the Christians believed from the first, for we find Paul teaching of their existence and speaking of a man "caught up to the *third* heaven" (II Cor. 13). "From these seven angels Ilda-Baoth shut up all that was above him, lest they should know of anything superior to himself."[5] They then created man in the image of their Father,[6] but prone and crawling on the earth like a worm. But the heavenly mother, Prunnikos, wishing to deprive Ilda-Baoth of the power with which she had unwittingly endowed him, infused into man a celestial spark—the spirit. Immediately man rose upon his feet, soared in mind beyond the limits of the seven spheres, and glorified the Supreme Father, *Him that is above Ilda-Baoth*. Hence, the latter, full of jealousy, cast down his eyes upon the lowest stratum of matter, and begot a potency in the form of a serpent, whom they (the Ophites) call his son. Eve, obeying him as the son of God, was persuaded to eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

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[4] This is the Nazarene system; the Spiritus, after uniting herself with Karabtanos (*matter*, turbulent and senseless), brings forth *seven badly-disposed stellars*, in the Orcus; "Seven Figures," which she bore "witless" (*Codex Nazaræus*, i., p. 118). Justin Martyr evidently adopts this idea, for he tells us of "the sacred prophets, who say that one and the same *spirit* is divided into *seven* spirits (pneumata). In the Apocalypse the Holy Spirit is subdivided into "*seven* spirits before the throne," from the Persian Mithraic mode of classifying.

[5] This certainly looks like the "*jealous* God" of the Jews.

[6] It is the *Elohim* (plural) who create Adam, and do not wish man to become "as one of us."

It is a self-evident fact that the serpent of the Genesis, who appears suddenly and without any preliminary introduction, must have been the antitype of the Persian Arch-Devs, whose head is Ash-Mogh, the "two-footed serpent of lies." If the Bible-serpent had been deprived of his limbs before he had tempted woman unto sin, why should God specify as a punishment that he should go "upon his belly?" Nobody supposes that he walked upon the extremity of his tail.

This controversy about the supremacy of Jehovah, between the Presbyters and Fathers on the one hand, and the Gnostics, the Nazarenes, and all the sects declared heterodox, as a last resort, on the other, lasted till the days of Constantine, and later. That the peculiar ideas of the Gnostics about the *genealogy* of Jehovah, or the proper place that had to be assigned, in the Christian-Gnostic Pantheon, to the God of the Jews, were at first deemed neither blasphemous nor heterodox is evident in the difference of opinions held on this question by Clemens of Alexandria, for instance, and Tertullian. The former, who seems to have known of Basilides better than anybody else, saw nothing heterodox or blamable in the mystical and transcendental views of the new Reformer. "In his eyes," remarks the author of *The Gnostics,* speaking of Clemens, "Basilides was not a heretic, *i.e.,* an innovator as regards the doctrines of the Christian Church, but a mere theosophic philosopher, who sought to express *ancient* truths under new forms, and perhaps to combine them with the new faith, the truth of which he could admit without necessarily renouncing the old, exactly as is the case with the learned Hindus of our day."

Not so with Irenæus and Tertullian.[7] The principal works of the latter *against the Heretics,* were written after his separation from the Catholic Church, when he had ranged himself among the zealous followers of Montanus; and teem with unfairness and bigoted prejudice.[8] He has exaggerated every Gnostic opinion to a monstrous absurdity, and his arguments are not based on coercive reasoning but simply on the blind stubborness of a partisan fanatic. Discussing

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[7] Some persons hold that he was Bishop of Rome; others, of Carthage.

[8] His polemical work addressed against the so-called orthodox Church—the Catholic—notwithstanding its bitterness and usual style of vituperation, is far more fair, considering that the "great African" is said to have been expelled from the Church of Rome. If we believe St. Jerome it is but the envy and the unmerited calumnies of the early Roman clergy against Tertullian which forced him to renounce the Catholic Church and become a Montanist. However, were the unlimited admiration of St. Cyprian, who terms Tertullian "The Master," and his estimate of him merited, we would see less error and paganism

Basilides, the "pious, god-like, theosophic philosopher," as Clemens of Alexandria thought him, Tertullian exclaims, "After this, Basilides, the *heretic,* broke loose.[9] He asserted that there is a Supreme God, by name Abraxas, by whom Mind was created, whom the Greeks call *Nous.* From her emanated the Word; from the Word, Providence; from Providence, Virtue and Wisdom; from these two again, Virtues, *Principalities,*[10] *and Powers* were made; thence infinite productions and emissions of angels. Among the lowest angels, indeed, and those that made this world, he sets *last of all* the god of the Jews, whom he denies to be God himself, affirming that he is but one of the angels."

It would be equally useless to refer to the direct apostles of Christ, and show them as holding in their controversies that Jesus never made any difference between his "Father" and the "Lord-God" of Moses. For the *Clementine Homilies,* in which occur the greatest argumentations upon the subject, as shown in the disputations alleged to have taken place between Peter and Simon the Magician, are now also proved to have been falsely attributed to Clement the Roman. This work, if written by an Ebionite—as the author of *Supernatural Religion* declares in common with some other commentators—must have been written either far later than the Pauline period, generally assigned to it, or the dispute about the identity of Jehovah with God, the "Father of Jesus," have been distorted by later interpolations. This disputation is in its very essence antagonistic to the early doctrines of the Ebionites. The latter, as demonstrated by Epiphanius and Theodoret, were the direct followers of the Nazarene sect (the Sabians), the "Disciples of John." He says, unequivocally, that the Ebionites believed in the *Æons* (emanations), that the Nazarenes were *their instructors,* and that "each imparted to the other out of his own wickedness." Therefore, holding the same beliefs as the Nazarenes did, an Ebionite would not have given even so much chance to the doctrine supported by Peter

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in the Church of Rome. The expression of Vincent of Lerius, "that every word of Tertullian was a sentence, and every sentence a triumph *over error,*" does not seem very happy when we think of the respect paid to Tertullian by the Church of Rome, notwithstanding his partial apostasy and the *errors* in which the latter still abides and has even enforced upon the world as *infallible* dogmas.

[9] Were not the views of the Phrygian Bishop Montanus, also deemed a HERESY by the Church of Rome? It is quite extraordinary to see how easily the Vatican encourages the abuse of one *heretic* Tertullian, against another *heretic* Basilides, when the abuse happens to further her own object.

[10] Does not Paul himself speak of *"Principalities* and *Powers* in heavenly places" (Eph. 3:10; 1:21), and confess that there be *gods* many and *Lords* many (Kurioi)? And angels, powers (Dunameis), and *Principalities?*

in the *Homilies*. The old Nazarenes, as well as the later ones, whose views are embodied in the *Codex Nazaræus,* never called Jehovah otherwise than *Adonai, Iurbo,* the God of the *Abortive*[11] (the orthodox Jews). They kept their beliefs and religious tenets so *secret* that even Epiphanius, writing as early as the end of the fourth century, confesses his ignorance as to their real doctrine. "Dropping the name of Jesus," says the Bishop of Salamis, "they neither call themselves *Iessaens,* nor continue to hold the name of the Jews, nor name themselves Christians, but *Nazarenes* . . . The resurrection of the dead is confessed by them . . . concerning Christ, *I cannot say* whether they think him a *mere man,* or as the *truth is,* confess that he was born through the *Holy Pneuma* from the Virgin."

While Simon Magus argues in the *Homilies* from the standpoint of every Gnostic (Nazarenes and Ebionites included), Peter, as a true apostle of circumcision, holds to the old Law and, as a matter of course, seeks to blend his belief in the divinity of Christ with his old Faith in the "Lord God" and ex-protector of the "chosen people." As the author of *Supernatural Religion* shows, the Epitome,[12] "a blending of the other two, probably intended to purge them from heretical doctrine" and, together with a great majority of critics, assigns to the *Homilies,* a date not earlier than the end of the third century, we may well infer that they must differ widely with their original, if there ever was one. Simon the Magician proves throughout the whole work that the Demiurgus, the Architect of the World, is not the highest Deity; and he bases his assertions upon the words of Jesus himself, who states repeatedly that "no man knew the Father." Peter is made in the *Homilies* to repudiate, with a great show of indignation, the assertion that the Patriarchs were not deemed worthy to know the Father; to which Simon objects again by quoting the words of Jesus who thanks the "Lord of Heaven and earth that what was concealed from the wise" he has "revealed to babes," proving very logically that according to these very words the Patriarchs could not have known the "Father." Then Peter argues, in his turn, that the expression, "what is *concealed* from the wise," etc., referred to the concealed *mysteries* of the creation.

This argumentation of Peter, therefore, had it even emanated

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[11] The Ophites, for instance, made of Adonai the third son of Ilda-Baoth, a malignant genius, and, like his other five brothers, a constant enemy and adversary of man, whose divine and immortal spirit gave man the means of becoming the rival of these genii.

[12] The "Clementines" are composed of three parts—to wit: the Homilies, the Recognitions, and an Epitome.

from the apostle himself, instead of being a "religious romance," as the author of *Supernatural Religion* calls it, would prove nothing whatever in favor of the identity of the God of the Jews, with the "Father" of Jesus. At best it would only demonstrate that Peter had remained from first to last "an apostle of circumcision," a Jew faithful to his old law, and a defender of the Old Testament. This conversation proves, moreover, the weakness of the cause he defends, for we see in the apostle a man who, although in most intimate relations with Jesus, can furnish us nothing in the way of direct proof that he ever thought of teaching that the all-wise and all-good Paternity he preached was the morose and revengeful thunderer of Mount Sinai. But what the *Homilies* do prove, is again our assertion that there was a secret doctrine preached by Jesus to the few who were deemed worthy to become its recipients and custodians. "And Peter said: 'We remember that our Lord and teacher, as commanding, said to us, guard the mysteries for me, and the sons of my house. Wherefore also he explained to his disciples, *privately,* the *mysteries of the kingdoms of the heavens*'."

If we now recall the fact that a portion of the Mysteries of the "Pagans" consisted of the *aporrheta,* or secret discourses; that the secret *Logia* or discourses of Jesus contained in the original Gospel according to Matthew, the meaning and interpretation of which St. Jerome confessed to be "a difficult task" for him to achieve, were of the same nature; and if we remember, further, that to some of the interior or final Mysteries only a very select few were admitted; and that finally it was from the number of the latter that were taken all the ministers of the holy "Pagan" rites, we will then clearly understand this expression of Jesus quoted by Peter: "Guard *the Mysteries for me and the sons of my house," i.e.,* of my doctrine. And, if we understand it rightly, we cannot avoid thinking that this "secret" doctrine of Jesus, even the technical expressions of which are but so many duplications of the Gnostic and Neo-platonic mystic phraseology—that this doctrine, we say, was based on the same transcendental philosophy of Oriental *Gnosis* as the rest of the religions of those and earliest days. That none of the later Christian sects, despite their boasting, were the inheritors of it, is evident from the contradictions, blunders, and clumsy repatching of the mistakes of every preceding century by the discoveries of the succeeding one. These mistakes, in a number of manuscripts claimed to be authentic, are sometimes so ridiculous as to bear on their face the evidence of

being pious forgeries. Thus, for instance, the utter ignorance of some patristic champions of the very gospels they claimed to defend. We have mentioned the accusation against Marcion by Tertullian and Epiphanius of mutilating the Gospel ascribed to Luke, and erasing from it that which is now proved to have never been in that Gospel at all.

Finally, the method adopted by Jesus of speaking in parables, in which he only followed the example of his sect, is attributed in the *Homilies* to a prophecy of Isaiah! Peter is made to remark: "For Isaiah said: 'I will open my mouth in parables, and I will utter things that have been kept secret from the foundation of the world:' " This erroneous reference to Isaiah of a sentence given in Psalms 78:2, is found not only in the apocryphal *Homilies,* but also in the Sinaitic *Codex.* Commenting on the fact in the *Supernatural Religion,* the author states that "Porphyry, in the third century, twitted Christians with this erroneous ascription by their inspired evangelist to Isaiah of a passage from a Psalm, and reduced the Fathers to great straits." Eusebius and Jerome tried to get out of the difficulty by ascribing the mistake to an "ignorant scribe;" and Jerome even went to the length of asserting that the name of Isaiah never stood after the above sentence in any of the old codices, but that the name of Asaph was found in its place, only *"ignorant* men had removed it." To this, the author again observes that "the fact is that the reading 'Asaph' for 'Isaiah' is not found in any manuscript extant; and, although 'Isaiah' has *disappeared* from all but a few obscure codices, it cannot be denied that the name anciently stood in the text. In the Sinaitic *Codex,* which is probably the earliest manuscript extant . . . and which is assigned to the fourth century," he adds, "the prophet *Isaiah* stands in the text by the first hand, *but is erased* by the second."

on the lookout

Platonic Revival

Good books on Plato seem to be the order of the day. Robert E. Cushman's *Therapeia* (Chapel Hill, 1958), is an extraordinary exposition of Plato's thought, conceived as a healing philosophy. He says in his Preface: "If, in our time, or, for that matter, since that of Francis Bacon, metaphysics is to be regarded as the relic of outworn thought, then it will be our business to show that Plato long ago anticipated the kind of mentality for which this judgment is inevitable and even proposed means for its radical transformation." Unlike most scholarly works, *Therapeia* seeks for no authority outside Plato himself, who is presented as a self-validating thinker. This is one more example of Plato's power to survive the incursions of both compromising theology and denying scientism, and to establish his deeply humanizing influence for anyone who will give his mind to the beneficent instruction of the Platonic Socrates. Another distinguished book of this sort is Paul Friedlander's *Plato—An Introduction* (Harper Torchbook), which brings to American readers the fruit of a scholar long known to European readers. Early in this volume the author shows an encouraging grasp, not merely of what is clear in Plato's writing, but of what is obscure and difficult.

Theory of "Ideas"

There is this, for example, concerning the theory of Ideas:

> Having studied the writings of modern thinkers on "Plato's Doctrine of *Ideas*," and then returning to Plato's own dialogues, one might well be surprised at how little the latter contain of this principle element of Plato's philosophy. In the early dialogues, even in the *Gorgias*, there are only hints to the effect that there are such things as "the good," "that which is eminently loved or dear," or "the truly beautiful." The *Phaedo* constructs, or rather seems to do so, proofs of immortality that presuppose the existence of *Ideas*. The *Symposium* describes the path to the eternal forms; the *Republic* sets forth the ascent through the sci-

ences and, in a great allegory, gives a symbolic representation of this path to the world of *Ideas;* the *Parmenides* deals with the logical difficulties; other late works are concerned with the logical presuppositions and implications of the theory of *Ideas.* Yet nowhere do we find a "doctrine" as such, or a system comprising the order of these forms, communicating their knowledge, or clarifying their relation to the world of appearance.

An Unwritten Teaching

Dr. Friedlander does not "complain" about this, but points to the explanation:

> Why this is so may be seen from the *Seventh Letter,* to whose passages we must so often return. There exists no written work of Plato's—there can and will be none—concerning that part of knowledge which is to him most significant "because it is in no way expressible like other subjects of teaching." Doubtless this refers to the realm of *Ideas.* Why can it not be written about or expressed? First, because it is not intended for everyone. Only the "well-constituted" (man) may hope to grasp the "well-constituted" (object). In addition to the intellectual capacities of learning and memory, an "affinity" is required: a special receptiveness of the soul to *Ideas.* Even though, according to the *Phaedo,* the human soul itself belongs to the realm of *Ideas,* the myth of the *Phaedrus* shows a hierarchical order among the souls, depending upon whether they raised themselves, for a shorter or longer period, to the heavenly sphere, and whether they followed Zeus or some other god. This explains what, in the less enthusiastic language of the *Letter,* is meant by "affinity": only a few rare individuals possess it.

Spark Transmitted

> It is necessary, too, that "master and disciple live together for a long time in common effort on behalf of the matter itself." For there is a path to knowledge leading upward through predetermined stages . . . to the higher and highest forms of knowledge. Ascent and descent must be repeated often, the forms of understanding on the various levels must be "rubbed against one another"; until finally, after toil and labor, rational insight suddenly lights up, or, as it is said earlier, "the spark is transmitted to and the fire kindled in the companion's soul." . . . The goal is an intellectual vision of the highest reality. The path leading to it may be outlined, as in the *Letter.* But it is one thing to point it out, another to follow it. And in the end it leads to something that cannot be said in words. This may almost suggest a mystical realm and a path of personal salvation, provided we do not think of mysticism in terms of wild ecstasy, and of salvation in doctrinal terms.

Truths of the Sanctuary

"Plato," wrote H.P.B. in *Isis Unveiled* (I, xi), "taught justice as subsisting in the soul of its possessor and his greatest good." Yet his commentators, she adds, "almost with one consent, shrink from every passage which implies that his metaphysics are based on a solid foundation, and not on ideal conceptions." One might think that Dr. Friedlander represents a new current in Platonic scholarship, which reflects the view that Plato was more than an idealistic "speculator," that he knew whereof he spoke. There is surely the spirit of reform of learning in this scholar's approach, pointing to a day referred to in *Isis* (I, 37):

> . . . even the veiled symbology of Plato is commonly misunderstood by the modern scholar. One day they may learn to know better, and so become aware that the method of extreme necessarianism was practiced in ancient as well as in modern philosophy; that from the first ages of man, the fundamental truths of all that we are permitted to know on earth was in the safe keeping of the adepts of the sanctuary; that the differences in creeds and religious practice was only external; and that those guardians of the primitive divine revelation, who had solved every problem that is within the grasp of human intellect, were bound together by a universal freemasonry of science and philosophy, which formed one unbroken chain around the globe.

Self-Defeat in Education

Speaking to "Enquirer" in *The Key to Theosophy*, "Theosophist" says: "Your mind is so full of intellectual subtleties and misconceptions that your natural intuition and perception of the truth cannot act." Later, H.P.B. refers to "the perniciousness of a system which turns out goods to order, irrespective of the natural proclivities and talents of the youth." Again and again, teachers of the present repeat these criticisms out of what they have learned from experience. For example, in the Foreword of his new book, *How Children Learn* (Pitman, $4.95), John Holt (author of *How Children Fail*) says:

> We like to say that we send children to school to teach them to think. What we do all too often, is to teach them to think badly, to give up a natural and powerful way of thinking in favor of a method that does not work well for them and that we rarely use ourselves.
>
> What are the results? Only a few children in school ever become good at learning in the way we try to make them learn. Most of them get humiliated, frightened, and discouraged. They

> use their minds, not to learn, but to get out of the things we tell them to do—to make them learn. In the short run, these strategies seem to work. They make it possible for many children to get through their schooling even though they learn very little. But in the long run these strategies are self-limiting and self-defeating, and destroy both character and intelligence. The children who use such strategies are prevented by them from growing into more than limited versions of the human beings they might have become. This is the real failure that takes place in school; hardly any children escape.

How Children Learn is rich in illustrations of the processes of awakening in the young. Mr. Holt has taught all his life and he knows what can happen in children who are helped to grow naturally.

Article on Reincarnation

The March *MD of Canada,* a magazine for medical doctors, presents a review entitled "Eternal Return," on reincarnation. It is headed with a text from the *Bhagavad-Gita* and begins:

> One of the most widespread beliefs in numerous cultures is the indestructibility of the soul and its migration from one earthly envelope to another. In some cultures the belief has become a basic tenet of religion; in others it satisfies a human need to discover the nature and destiny of man.
>
> Many terms have been used to describe rebirth: the Greeks called the passage of the soul after death into animal or human form metempsychosis; the broader term transmigration of soul includes the possibility of rebirth in the form of plants, animals, demons, or divinities; frequently used is the word reincarnation, Latin meaning literally "taking on of flesh," usually restricted to rebirth in the same species immediately after death or after an interval of disembodiment.

Various Doctrines

While there is obvious confusion in the discussion—the Neoplatonic rejection of the idea of birth of human souls into animal bodies is not referred to, nor the Theosophical denial of this possibility—but as a kind of inventory of what various peoples are said to have believed, it is probably faithful to the sources used. What is interesting is that the article was deemed by the editors as likely to interest the magazine's readers. The idea of reincarnation is not attacked or subjected to criticism. If anything, it carries a mood of respect. There is a review of tribal beliefs in reincarnation in various parts of the world; the Theravada Buddhist rejection of an

enduring soul is spoken of, yet reincarnation is said to continue until all karma is exhausted, after which Nirvana is entered, but the problem of *what* in this case enters Nirvana (since there is no enduring soul) is not discussed; Hindu belief is described as promising relief from the wanderings of *samsara,* through the working out of karma and the identification of the individual soul with Brahman. Patanjali is quoted: "The knowledge which springs from the heightened powers of discrimination is the knowledge that saves from rebirth."

Attention is given Pythagoras and Plato. The Egyptian belief in reincarnation is taken from Herodotus, who wrote:

> The Egyptians teach that the soul is immortal and that at the death of the body it enters into some other living thing then coming to birth. The soul passes through all creatures, of land, sea, and air (which cycle it completes in three thousand years) then enters once more into a human body at birth.

Reference to H.P.B.

Origen, the *Zohar,* the Cathari and the Albigenses are cited, also Bruno and Boehme. Madame Blavatsky is called one of the "best known leaders" of the Theosophical Society and her picture is one of the illustrations used. William James's inclination to reincarnation is mentioned and Lafcadio Hearn's report of the rebirth of Katsugoro is summarized. There are many other scattered evidences of belief in or philosophical advocacy of reincarnation collected in this article, and it ends with a "summing up" taken from Plato: "The soul of man is immortal and imperishable." A reference to H.P.B.'s writings is inaccurate, since it calls *Isis Unveiled* her "major work," neglecting to mention *The Secret Doctrine.* In general, however, the article seems well-intentioned and its readers will almost certainly gain the impression that reincarnation has claimed the interest and allegiance of countless people in the past, including some of the most distinguished minds concerned with religion and philosophy, and that it is very much alive in the present, due mainly to the efforts of Theosophists.

Population Explosion

In *For unto Us a Child Is Born,* S. P. R. Charter, a California ecologist, writes philosophically concerning the population explosion, showing that restriction of growth through birth-control is by no means the panacea that some authorities claim. Toward the

end of his discussion, Mr. Charter has the following:

> Why is human life holy? and to whom?
>
> It is surely holy to the man and woman who, with forethought, attempt to procreate a child who, for one or many moments, is their living faith in the future. Human life may not be holy to the man and woman who, without forethought, bring a child into our world. And yet, the child of accident or despair or ignorance is indivisible with the child of forethought; neither child, by the fact of emergence, possesses conscious awareness of forethought or accident. In this context it is forethought which can lend a larger dimension to *parents* since, with faith, there can be a feeling of holiness toward all life.

Concern Beyond Self

> Where children are planned for by parents, and not by the state, it would be expected that the living faith in the future would be both staunch and humane; that Life would indeed be considered holy; that individual-man, as the sole container of human life, would be cherished.
>
> In the USA planned parenthood is practiced quite extensively, especially by the educated; and yet, it is also in the USA that faith in expediency and technology reigns supreme. Is this perhaps because persuasion for planned parenthood, for educated and uneducated, is based mainly on economic goals—and economic goals are more readily reachable through expediency and technology without much concern for the day after tomorrow? or for others beyond self? In terms of population-pressures it would appear that planned parenthood itself requires deeper concepts of responsibility; that those individuals and organizations devoted to the good of planned parenthood as one solution to proliferating numbers of people need to generate an awareness of the holiness of all Life, in themselves and in those parents of forethought. Merely encouraging fewer births through the use of devices and techniques is quite obviously no longer sufficient for the survival of the individual confronting compression in a world of conflict. Our numbers are now so large that birth-control reductions, of themselves and with no larger purpose, cannot generate awareness of the value of life without which human survival is in standing question.

Egos Seeking Birth

A general return to ancient conceptions of the family life may seem distant indeed, in these days of doctrinaire hedonism, but there is at least the mood of reverence for procreation in this thoughtful discussion. It seems evident that regeneration of the very foundations of thought about human existence must prepare

the way for reconsideration of the meaning of family life. This would involve, first of all, the idea that a child is born because an immortal ego needing further experience is knocking at the door of birth. With the passing, perhaps through inner disgust, of our sensate culture, there may come those who are able to set an example of a natural family life, and another spirit will begin to animate those who are parents.

To Save the Natural Environment

A more familiar aspect of ecology was the subject of an editorial in the *Nation* for May 20. The writer points out that while the student insurrection at Columbia University claimed much front-page attention last April, another event, a two-day conference in New York, held at about the same time, got far less notice than it deserved. The conference was named "Challenge for Survival" and its reports dealt with the accelerating attack by human beings on the health of their natural environment. The seriousness of man's devastations of nature cannot compete with the interest in a war or a riot, and the *Nation* writer observes that perhaps the most encouraging thing about the conference was that it could have been held at all. He continues:

> Ten years ago, one participant remarked, it would have been inconceivable. Ecology was then a matter almost solely of academic concern, and expense alone would have been an obstacle; this time, however, the National Science Foundation provided supplementary support. The second ray of hope is the fact that industry is beginning to realize that operations which contribute to the degradation of the environment produce bad public relations now and may lead to worse consequences in the future.

Multiplying Pollutions

The most important contribution of the conference was in the emphasis on the "cumulative abuse of the biosphere." According to the *Nation* editorial:

> The very first speaker quoted F. R. Fosberg on "The Preservation of Man's Environment": "It is entirely possible that man will not survive the changed environment that he is creating, either because of failure of resources, war over their dwindling supply, or failure of his nervous system to evolve as rapidly as the change in the environment will require." But this is not a current statement. Fosberg was quoted from *Proceedings of the Ninth Pacific Science Conference*, 1957, and since then the spoliation of nature has gone on apace.

> What threatens is not a new malignancy but one that is metastasizing with increasing speed. More than 300 years ago, before Watt invented his steam engine, London was already beset by smoke palls. But that was an exceptional situation; now it is far from exceptional and it gets a good deal of attention, although not nearly enough in proportion to the menace it presents. The hazards are increased because of the insidious nature of the deleterious effects. G. M. Goodwell of the Brookhaven National Laboratory, accustomed to thinking of radioactive substances in terms of half-lives, pointed out that DDT persists with a half-life in excess of ten years, and in that period can have catastrophic effects on animal populations all over the world.

Obscure Effects

Writing on the same subject in the March *Etc.*, Jerome D. Frank, a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins, says that many of the dangers from pollution are undetectable by the senses:

> Radioactive isotopes and pesticides in our tissues and the slowly rising carbon dioxide content of the air cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt, so it is easy to forget about them. When they do intrude on consciousness, in the form of eye-burning smog or brown water, in the language of perceptual psychology, they are ground rather than figure. As an authority on air pollution says: ". . . the private citizen is unaware of the fact that the substance he is inhaling may eventually cause cancer of the lungs. He does not associate a bad cough with atmospheric conditions. . . ."

Wanted: A National Pantheism

It becomes apparent that "scare" methods to induce reforms can hardly be successful. What is wanted is a fundamental change in our attitude toward nature, including our own human nature. If we wait until our bodies are overwhelmed by the poisons in the biosphere, it will then be far too late to institute sufficient changes in behavior. Richard L. Means, who teaches sociology at Kalamazoo College in Michigan, put his finger on the basic trouble in an article in the *Saturday Review* for last Dec. 2, saying that we have lost sight of the truth that *man is a part of the being of nature*. Present-day moralists like Harvey Cox, he pointed out, suppose that our ethical problems are entirely limited to the relations of man with man, and exist only "within this urban world, and not with the animals, the trees, the air—that is, the natural habitat." Means calls for recovery of the sense of participation in life with all nature. Only by this means, he seems to be saying, can we restore both ourselves and

the world to a healthful, natural life. This view, which seems like a pragmatic version of Theosophical philosophy, has interesting confirmation from a practicing psychiatrist, Dr. Harold Searles, who writes out of long experience with patients of the importance in mental health of being able to *feel* a unity with the natural world.

Kinship of Life

In a recent book he said:

> It is my conviction that there is within the human individual a sense of *relatedness to his total environment,* that this relatedness is one of the transcendently important facts of human living, and that if he tries to ignore its importance to himself, he does so at peril of his psychological well-being. . . . By "relatedness" I mean a sense of intimate kinship, a psychological commitment to the structural relationship which exists between man and the various ingredients of his nonhuman environment.

The ancients may have had a less cumbersome way of putting this, but Dr. Searles' meaning is nonetheless clear. He is talking about the brotherhood of all life—something the modern world has almost entirely forgotten, and for this reason suffers penalties that are not understood. There is something to be said for the intelligence of men who find this out, apparently without the help of philosophy. But to accomplish what needs to be done, the help of philosophy is absolutely indispensable.

Tolstoy on "Moral Acts"

In 1899, Leo Tolstoy wrote to a desperate young man facing conscription. His letter (which appears in the February issue of the *Atlantic*) examines the moral issues involved in the use of military power. Tolstoy said:

> We can stay home, go abroad, or concern ourselves with farming or science according to what we find useful for ourselves or others; for neither in domestic life, foreign travel, farming, nor science is there anything immoral. But under no circumstance can we inflict violence on people, torture or kill them because we think such acts could be of use to us or to others. We cannot and may not do such things, especially because we can never be sure of the results of our actions. Often actions which seem the most advantageous of all turn out in fact to be destructive; and the reverse is also true.

Internal Guidance

It is perhaps an indication of changing ideas of morality that the *Atlantic* now publishes this letter. However, the editor's comments

do not deal with the sources of Tolstoy's conviction as a means of helping the reader to a better comprehension of his thought. A clear statement along these lines is found in an essay by Tolstoy, "On the Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria" (translated and published by R. V. Sampson in 1965). In this comment, written a few years before his death, Tolstoy speaks again and again of the evolutionary principle he believes to be at work in the consciousness of all men. This consciousness, he says, consists of a "new understanding of life," an understanding—

> that each man bears within himself a spiritual principle common to all people, manifesting itself in love and drawing all people towards unity, and that therefore the fundamental guidance of the life of man can be only internal, and in no wise external arising from the will of other people.
>
> In spite of the order of life, based on the subjection of one set of people to another, establishing itself ever more and more, oftener and oftener there appeared such teaching—among the Hindus and Chinese and Hebrews and Romans and Greeks—which revealed to people that in each man is manifest a spiritual principle common to all; and that therefore the foundation of life, which ought to be uniting people, must not be the arbitrary rule of one people over another, but this consciousness of a single spiritual principle in all men, manifesting itself in love.

From this one sees the origin of Tolstoy's moral certainty, and may obtain an explanation, also, of why this great man's thought has exerted such far-reaching influence, through the years. Like some others of the nineteenth century, he wrote for the future as well as his own time.

"New World's Oldest Dated Work"

A discussion in the Los Angeles *Times* (Dec. 14, 1967) of the ancient Olmec civilization in Mexico adds little to what was given in Lookout for August, 1967, but that little seems significant. An inscribed stone "was discovered bearing a date equivalent to Nov. 4, 291 B.C., the New World's oldest dated work of man." This, with the samples of charcoal taken last summer from ancient fires near La Venta's ceremonial court, may help to determine the probable date of the last vestiges of Olmec civilization.